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ABSTRACT

When the curriculum revision process began at a southern university for an upcoming program review, elementary education faculty decided to look at current coursework to determine whether the "Arts in the Integrated Curriculum" course adequately prepared preservice elementary education majors to teach the creative arts (music, movement, drama, visual arts). Since the new program would certify K-6 teachers, instead of the previous 1-6 certification, a concern existed regarding preparation for both primary and upper elementary grades. A study examined whether those students interested in teaching the primary grades felt prepared to teach the integrated arts in kindergarten. While the research method was qualitative, the research design followed an interpretive approach and allowed for interviews and content analysis. Subjects were obtained from a sample of 15 junior and senior level teacher education students who had completed the aforementioned course. A telephone questionnaire was developed that focused on preferred teaching levels, feelings of being appropriately prepared for preferred teaching levels, and recommendations for improvements. Findings indicated that students who preferred to teach primary grades felt adequately prepared to integrate the creative arts. Findings also suggested that students were already applying techniques learned in the course to other assigned course projects and job-related situations such as a summer library program. It was concluded that the existing course met the needs of the sample group. The recommendations were evaluated and implemented in the existing course. Contains a sample questionnaire and five references. (BT)

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THE CREATIVE ARTS: ARE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION MAJORS PREPARED FOR CURRICULUM INTEGRATION OF THE ARTS?

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THE CREATIVE ARTS: ARE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION MAJORS PREPARED FOR CURRICULUM INTEGRATION OF THE ARTS?

Purpose

Many areas of the arts in the regular school curriculum have gone through changes over the past forty years. During the 1960s, cutbacks were made in art and music programs to finance a renewed focus in math, science, and foreign language instruction. Then, in the 1970s, art programs began to appear again in many school settings. In the 1980s, educators had to decide where the arts would best fit into the regular curriculum. Finally, in the 1990s, school systems are still trying to settle that question (Ryan & Cooper, 1995).

When the curriculum revision process began at a southern university for an upcoming state program review, elementary education faculty decided to look at current coursework to determine whether the "Arts in the Integrated Curriculum" course adequately prepared preservice elementary education majors to teach the creative arts (music, movement, drama, and the visual arts). Since the new program would certify teachers K-6 instead of the previous 1-6 certification, a concern existed regarding preparation for both primary and upper elementary grades. The primary purpose of this study was to determine if those students interested in teaching the primary grades felt adequately prepared to teach the integrated arts in kindergarten.

Methodology

Research Design

While the research method for this study was qualitative, the research design followed an interpretative approach. This design allowed for interviews and content analysis (Vierra & Pollock, 1988). According to Noblit and Hare (1988), "an interpretation enables the reader to translate the case studied into his or her own social understanding. Interpretive accounts, above all, provide a perspective and, in so doing, achieve the goal of enhancing human discourse" (p.18). Merriam (1988) further stated that, because of the "thick description" (p.28), interpretative case studies may actually illustrate or support theoretical assumptions.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were obtained from a sample of 15 junior and senior level teacher-education students enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a southern university. The students had completed a required course entitled "Arts in the Integrated Curriculum."

Procedures

A telephone questionnaire was developed in order to gather appropriate data. The questionnaire focused on the following areas: preferred teaching levels, feeling of being appropriately

prepared for preferred teaching levels, and recommendations for improvements. Students were told at the beginning of the interview that the data would be used to help determine curriculum decisions involved in a state program review. A cross-case analysis was used to determine the results.

Findings

The findings indicated that students who preferred to teach primary grades felt adequately prepared to integrate the creative arts (music, movement, drama, and the visual arts) into the total curriculum for all grade levels. The findings also indicated that students were already applying techniques learned in "Arts in the Integrated Curriculum" to other assigned course projects and job related situations such as a summer library program.

Implications for Programming

The main conclusion was the existing course met the needs of the sample group. Since curriculum specialists have suggested integrating the arts with other subject areas (Ryan & Cooper, 1995), this course met that objective. It was already providing activities to support the classroom teacher when teaching the arts (music, movement, drama, and the visual arts) within the other curriculum areas such as reading, math, science, and social studies.

In addition, since improvement is one of the primary purposes of qualitative research (Patton, 1990), the recommendations were evaluated and implemented in the existing course. Currently, more consistency with course content is carefully looked at when the course is taught by different instructors.

Table 1

Telephone Questionnaire

Students	What grade level are you interested in teaching?	After taking EED 333, do you feel prepared?	What are your suggestions for improvements?
A	1-3	Yes, much more than before.	None. I liked the sharing of ideas.
B	1-3	Yes.	No. The notebook with ideas was great and will be helpful and useful.
C	3-5	Yes! I loved that class.	None. I am already using the ideas in a library program this summer.
D	3-5	Yes! I am using the folder now in "Reading Diagnosis."	[Instructors] need to teach the same things. The puppets were not covered [in one section of the course]. I liked the sharing of ideas with classmates and the input from others.
E	1-3	Yes, very much so.	None. I liked all of the hands-on stuff.
F	2-3	Yes. Wonderful!	None. The notebooks are very helpful. You couldn't possibly cram more information into the class.
G	5-6	I'm prepared but a lot of the activities that everyone else did seemed to be for younger children.	None.

(Table 1 Continued)

H	3-5	Yes.	None. With all the lesson plans collected we have an abundance of material to use.
I	6-8	Yes.	Maybe have larger groups for presentations.
J	2-3	Yes.	None. I loved the class.
K	4	Pretty much. A lot done was for lower level but you could bump it up to a higher level.	I really liked the class. I can't think of any way to improve it.
L	3-4	Yes, very prepared.	None. The class was great.
M	K-3	Yes.	None. I feel I have a resource book full of ideas.
N	K-3	It gave us a lot of ideas for our class notebook. I feel prepared!	My only concern involves the exit exam and the class textbook. We did not refer a lot to the text, so I am hoping the questions will come from the class sessicns.
O	4-6	Yes, I especially have a lot of ideas to use with younger children.	More focus on upper elementary grades such as specific activities for that age group. More focus on how children could write their own play (for older children). Loved the puppet show!

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